AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

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1-14: (canceled)

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15. (new): A method for facilitating browsing of a database of items, the method comprising:

receiving a search query from a user;

executing the search query to generate a search results list of items within the database that match the search query;

presenting to the user a first web page that displays at least a portion of the search results list together with an option to save the search query for subsequent use;

in response to election of said option by the user to save the search query, storing the search query in association with a category name specified by the user; and

presenting to the user a second web page that provides an option for the user to select the category name to view an updated list of items within the database that match the search query;

whereby the search query and category name serve as a user-defined category that may be selected by the user over time to browse the database.

16. (new): The method of Claim 15, wherein the second web page displays, in conjunction with the category name specified by the user, a numerical value indicating a number of items falling within the user-defined category.

17. (new): The method of Claim 16, wherein the numerical value is generated by re-executing the search query when the user requests the second web page, such that the numerical value accurately reflects a current state of the database.

18. (new): The method of Claim 15, wherein the user-defined category is maintained private to the user, and is listed on the second web page together with one or more public

categories that are selectable by the user, whereby the user can select between the private and public categories to browse the database.

19. (new): The method of Claim 15, wherein the user-defined category is a user-defined product category that is private to the user, and is displayed on the second web page together with one or more public, merchant-defined product categories, wherein each user-defined and merchant-defined product category is displayed on the second web page as a respective hyperlink that is selectable by the user to view a corresponding set of products represented in the database.

20. (new): The method of Claim 15, wherein the category name is displayed on the second web page as a hyperlink that, when selected, causes a set of items falling within the user-defined category to be displayed.

21. (new): The method of Claim 15, further comprising the computer-implemented steps of:

comparing the search query to a history of search queries submitted by the user to identify substantially-identical query submissions; and

using the substantially-identical query submissions to automatically generate or suggest a personalized category for the user.

22. (new): The method of Claim 21, further comprising providing to the user an option to accept, and assign a name to, the personalized category.

23. (new): A web site system that performs the method of Claim 15.

24. (new): A system for facilitating browsing of an electronic catalog, the system comprising:

a database which contains an electronic catalog of items; and

a server system coupled to the database, the server system providing a user interface for browsing the electronic catalog over a computer network, the user interface

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including functionality for users to at least (1) formulate and submit search queries for searching the electronic catalog, (2) assign category names to individual search queries, and (3) save the search queries and associated category names on the server system for subsequent use as user-defined categories that are selectable via the user interface to browse the electronic catalog of items;

wherein the server system presents to a user that has created one or more user-defined categories a web page that lists the one or more user-defined categories such that each such category may be selected to view a corresponding set of catalog items.

25. (new): The system of Claim 24, wherein the web page additionally displays, for each of the user-defined categories, a numerical value indicating a current number of catalog items falling within the respective user-defined category.

26. (new): The system of Claim 25, wherein the server system generates each such numerical value by executing the corresponding search query when the user requests the web page.

27. (new): The system of Claim 24, wherein the electronic catalog is an electronic catalog of products that are available for purchase, and the user-defined categories are user-defined product categories.

28. (new): The system of Claim 24, wherein the server system maintains the user-defined categories created by a user private to that user, and displays the user-defined categories together with public categories that are also selectable to browse the electronic catalog.

29. (new): The system of Claim 28, wherein the server system presents each user-defined category and each public category on the web page as a respective hyperlink that is selectable by the user to view corresponding catalog items.

30. (new): The system as in Claim 24, wherein the server system automatically compares queries submitted by the same user to identify query resubmission events, and uses the query resubmission events to automatically create and/or suggest categories for users.

31. (new): The system as in Claim 24, wherein the user interface provides an option for a user to specify a display order for displaying a personal set of user-defined categories.

32. (new): A computer-implemented method of facilitating browsing of an electronic repository of items, the method comprising:

maintaining a history of search queries submitted by a user to search the electronic repository of items;

analyzing the history of search queries to identify a search query that has been submitted multiple times by the user; and

in response to identifying the search query, creating for the user, or providing to the user an option to create, a persistent link that is selectable by the user to view a current set of items within the repository that match the search query.

33. (new): The method of Claim 32, further comprising prompting the user to assign a name to the search query, and displaying the name in conjunction with the persistent link.

34. (new): The method of Claim 32, further comprising displaying, in conjunction with the persistent link, a numerical value indicating a current number of items that match the search query.

35. (new): The method of Claim 32, wherein the step of analyzing the history of search queries comprises comparing search queries on a term-by-term basis to locate search queries that are substantially identical.

36. (new): The method of Claim 32, further comprising including the persistent link within a personal categories page in which the persistent link serves as one of a plurality of item categories that are selectable to browse the electronic repository.

37. (new): The method of Claim 32, wherein the persistent link is created for the user automatically in response to identifying the search query that has been submitted multiple times.

38. (new): A web site system that performs the method of Claim 32.

39. (new): A method for facilitating the generation of an order of multiple items from an electronic catalog of items, comprising:

presenting a user an option to view the electronic catalog using multiple browsing modes, each browsing mode providing a respective method for identifying desired items in the catalog; and

wherever the user views an item within any one of the multiple browsing modes, displaying the item together with a field that indicates a quantity of the item currently selected for purchase, said field being editable by the user to modify said quantity;

whereby, during browsing of the electronic catalog, the user is notified of, and provided an option to modify, quantities of items selected for purchase without having to access a shopping cart.

40. (new): The method as in Claim 39, wherein the multiple browsing modes include (1) a search mode in which users generate and submit queries for searching the catalog, and (2) a category-based mode in which users browse the catalog using pre-existing item categories.

41. (new): The method as in Claim 39, wherein the multiple browsing modes include a search mode in which users generate and submit search queries for searching the catalog, and the method comprises responding to user submission of a search query by generating a search results page in which each catalog item that matches the search query is displayed together with an editable field indicating the quantity of that item currently selected for purchase.

42. (new): The method as in Claim 39, the multiple browsing modes include a category-based mode in which users browse the catalog using pre-existing item categories, and the method comprises responding to user selection of an item category by generating a page in which each catalog item that falls within the item category is displayed together with an editable field indicating the quantity of that item currently selected for purchase.

43. (new): A system for facilitating browsing of an electronic catalog, the system comprising:

a database which contains an electronic catalog of items;

a computer system coupled to the database and to a publicly-accessible computer network; and

a software application which runs on the computer system and provides multiple browsing modes for users to browse the catalog and select items for purchase, wherein the application displays to a user a quantity of each catalog item selected for purchase throughout the multiple browsing modes, to thereby facilitate generating orders for multiple items;

whereby the application enables users to view quantities of items selected for purchase during browsing of the electronic catalog without accessing a shopping cart.

44. (new): The system of Claim 43, wherein the multiple browsing modes include a search mode in which users generate and submit search queries for searching the electronic catalog, and the software application response to a user submission of a search query by generating a search results page in which each catalog item that matches the search query is displayed together with an editable field indicating a quantity of that item currently selected for purchase.

45. (new): The system of Claim 43, wherein the multiple browsing modes include a category-based mode in which users browse the electronic catalog using pre-existing item categories, and the software application responds to user selection of an item category by

generating a page in which each catalog item falling within the item category is displayed together with an editable field indicating a quantity of that item currently selected for purchase.

46. (new): The system of Claim 43, wherein the application provides an option for the user to save, under a user-specified name, a representation of the user's selections of a plurality of items and associated item quantities, and to subsequently and recurrently restore said selections using said user-specified name, whereby the application facilitates recurring purchases of like sets of items.

47. (new): A computer-implemented method for facilitating the generation of an order from a catalog of items, comprising the steps of:

    monitoring and recording selections of items by a user for purchase;

    generating a list of items which is responsive to at least one of (1) submission by the user of a search query for searching the catalog, and (2) selection by the user of an item category for viewing; and

    presenting the list of items to the user together with corresponding quantity values which indicate quantities of items selected for purchase;

    the method thereby allowing the user to browse the catalog while keeping track of the items selected for purchase and their respective quantities.

48. (new): The method as in Claim 47, wherein the step of presenting the list comprises displaying a form in which the quantity values are displayed in item-specific fields that can be edited by the user, so that the user can modify the quantities while viewing the list.

49. (new): The method as in Claim 47, wherein the list is a search results list generated in response to submission by the user of a search query for searching the catalog, and the step of presenting the search results list comprises displaying each item in the list with a respective field that contains a respective quantity value, each such field being editable by the user to change quantities of items selected for purchase.

50. (new): The method as in Claim 47, wherein the list is a category list generated in response to selection by the user of an item category, and the step of presenting the category list comprises displaying each item in the list with a respective field that contains the respective quantity value, each such field being editable by the user to change quantities of items selected for purchase.

51. (new): The method as in Claim 47, wherein the step of presenting the list of items to the user together with corresponding quantity values comprises displaying a quantity value of zero for an item in the list that is not currently selected for purchase.

52. (new): The method as in Claim 47, wherein the method enables the user to monitor quantities of items selected for purchase without having to view a shopping cart.

53. (new): The method as in Claim 47, further comprising saving, under a user-specified name, a representation of the user's current selection of a set of items and item quantities, and providing an option for the user to subsequently restore said selections using said name, whereby the system facilitates recurring purchases of like sets of items.

54. (new): An electronic commerce system, comprising:

a computer system coupled to a publicly-accessible computer network, the computer system including:

a first user interface through which buyers place orders over the network with a merchant and view the status of such orders, the first interface including a message field for a buyer to generate and submit to the merchant messages that are linked to particular orders; and

a second user interface through which the merchant views the orders, including corresponding order-specific messages from buyers, and specifies the status of the orders, the second interface including a message field for the merchant to generate and submit messages to the buyers that are linked to specific orders;

wherein at least one of the first and the second user interfaces displays a history of the messages between the merchant and a buyer that are linked to a selected order.

55. (new): The system of Claim 54, wherein the first and second interfaces comprise web pages served by a common host site.

56. (new): The system of Claim 54, further comprising a central database that stores messages between the buyers and the merchant in association with the orders to which such messages correspond.

57. (new): The system of Claim 54, wherein the first user interface is provided by a customer application and the second interface is provided by a merchant application, wherein the customer and merchant application access a common order database that stores information about the orders.

58. (new): The system of Claim 54, wherein the first and second user interfaces each provide a link that is selectable to view the history of the messages between merchant and buyer.

59. (new): The system of Claim 54, wherein the first and second user interfaces provide for communications between the merchant and the buyer without use of electronic mail.

60. (new): The system of Claim 54, wherein the first and second user interfaces are linked to a common order database that stores information about said orders.